

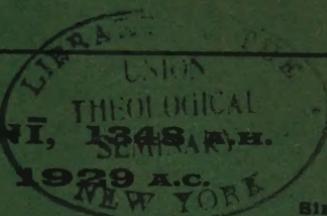
# The Islamic Review

Edited by AL-HAJ KHWAJA KAMAL-UD-DIN.

XVII.]

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وَصَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَسَلَّمَ

# THE ISLAMIC REVIEW

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RABĪ'U 'TH-THĀNĪ, 1348 A.H.

VOL. XVII. SEPTEMBER, 1929 A.C. NO. 9

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## SOME HOSTILE CRITICS OF ISLAM

A CERTAIN clergyman—the Reverend Mr. Cash by name—wrote the following meaningless lines in his book *The Muslim World in Revolution*, with reference to our work at Woking:

“There is an attempt to make Mohammad the ethical Ideal for mankind, and this has involved the painting of a new Mohammad in colours drawn from a Christian paintbox.”

These lines stirred my pen, and in my book *The Ideal Prophet*, I wrote as follows: “I propose in these pages to sketch briefly the manners and character of the Holy Prophet. I shall substantiate my statements by references to such of his own actions as have been set down in properly authenticated records. On the other hand, though the authenticity of the Bible has admittedly been impeached, I accept nevertheless everything said therein of Jesus as correct. It will then be possible for critics to decide whether the picture which I shall paint of Muhammad owes anything whatever to the record of Christ in the Bible. I assure them that they will not find in the Bible even the shadow of a one-tenth part of what they will read in these pages concerning the Holy Prophet.”

Nearly four years have elapsed since I penned the above, but my words have remained unchallenged. I have reason to

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believe that Mr. Cash read them, inasmuch as he reviewed the book, but he does not seem to have found anything to say by way of rebuttal; on the other hand, he has been compelled, as I am told—for I could not read his review myself, since it appeared at a time when I was dangerously ill—to admit the genuineness of what I have written in these pages. He, however, could not be untrue to his vocation as a clergyman; and in order to deify a person born of a woman he must needs pick holes in the characters of others. Therefore he remarked in his review that my “clever pen” only gave the bright side of the picture and intentionally omitted its dark one.

Though, for the reasons I have stated, I myself have been unable to meet this gentleman on his own ground, yet I have been looking impatiently for a proof of his assertion from his own pen. He kept silence for a long time, and then approached his task in an indirect way. In his recent book, *The Expansion of Islam*, he brought certain false allegations against the Holy Prophet, basing his charges on most unreliable authorities. This I had anticipated in my first edition. We know what to expect from such people on this subject. So to put them on the right path in the matter I gave certain directions, showing them a way in which to sift the true from the false when writing about the Holy Prophet Muhammad. In this connection I wrote the following:

“The books of *Maghazi*, on the other hand, have not appealed to the Muslim Divines and ‘traditionists,’ and their writers have not been accepted as reliable. Among these writers, Wāqidī and his Kātib have been regarded, in the Muhammadan world, as the *least trustworthy* and most *careless biographers* of Muhammad. Of the former, Ibn Khallikān speaks thus: ‘The traditions received from him (Wāqidī) are considered of feeble authority, and doubts have been expressed on the subject of his veracity’ (vol. iii, p. 62). Imám Shāfi‘ī—one of the four great Imams of the Muslim world—says that all the books of Wāqidī are a load of lies, and other ‘traditionists’ say the same.”

It must not be forgotten that the veracity of Wāqidī and the other fiction-writers among his fraternity—now unfor-

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tunately the only authorities of our adverse critics in Europe —was impugned in the early days of Islam. It was done in the interests of truth and not merely for the purpose of meeting a hostile criticism of the Holy Prophet. In fact no such occasion arose even for hundreds of years after. The early Muslim writers on Muhammad always made honest research before they wrote anything on the subject. In doing so they brushed aside Wāqidī and others as unworthy of any trust. Had they done so just to refute adverse criticism of Islam, one must needs have hesitated to accept their judgment without personal and independent inquiry into the matter.

Unfortunately the first European writers on Islam approached the subject with sinister motives. They were either politicians or fanatics of the Romish Church. To stem the ever-rising wave of Islam in the south of Europe during the Middle Ages, they thought that they could not do better than besmear the noble countenance of Islam. But they could not find any help whatever towards achieving their object in ancient Islamic literature of an authentic nature. They, however, came across certain remarks in Ibn Khallikān, Ahmad-bin-Hanbal, Shāfi‘ī, and other writers, which reflected adversely on Wāqidī and his fraternity. Here was a clue to what they were looking for to give effect to their evil designs. Straightway they pounced upon these writers of fiction and quoted them in support of the heaps of other lies in which their books abounded.

Next came a generation of Western workers in the field, of a very different character—among them Dr. Weil. These men, approaching the subject with no other motive than that of seeking after truth, refused to rely on writers like Wāqidī for the above reasons. But unfortunately events took a new turn in later days, when the Western nations became interested in the activities of foreign Christian missions. In the extension of such missions they saw the furtherance of their political aims. It was to help the said missions, as Sale admits, that Muir, Elphinstone, Sale himself, and others trod in the false steps of the early European writers on Islam. But the days had gone “when one could say a thing in some corner

of the world and nobody would raise a voice of protest." Sir William Muir was at once taken to task by Dr. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, of Aligarh, who also exposed the folly of relying on Wāqidī and similar writers. This timely challenge produced the desired result in many quarters, but it could not prevent the workers in foreign missions from continuing their objectionable practice.

In this connection I would like to say a word. It is more than one thousand years since Wāqidī and his fraternity were declared to be unreliable writers on the Prophet. Should not, then, honesty and decency demand from our critics that they do one of two things—either never base their writings on such untrustworthy sources, or first repudiate the charges standing against those sources and then accept them as authority? In the face of my remarks on Wāqidī and his fraternity Mr. Cash should first have vindicated his pet authorities, and then he would have been perfectly at liberty to write anything he liked.

But it was, I am afraid, asking too much to expect him to undertake such a task apart from his motives in quoting Wāqidī. It needed scholar-like research for which, unfortunately, Mr. Cash would seem to be but ill equipped. His few years' sojourn in Egypt could hardly have turned him into an Arabic scholar. A superficial reader of his book may perhaps give him credit for research, but a writer of average capacity could produce a similar book without knowing a single word of Arabic. It is not the fruit of any serious literary labour, but sheer pot-boiling. Sir William Muir got his material from the above-mentioned early writers in Europe. He was copied in his turn by Margoliouth, Zwemer, Tisdal, and others, and now by Mr. Cash. But the silence of Professor Margoliouth in this connection is noteworthy. He also has relied on Wāqidī in his attempt to disfigure the Prophet. He also was informed of the wrong he had done to Islam in quoting Wāqidī. He felt "shocked" when he was told that his "authority" was a well-known "liar" in the history of Islam. It was his duty either to make proper amends or to defend Wāqidī from the Arab authorities who had impugned him. He adorns the Arabic chair of a great university—Oxford. He was

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quite capable of performing the task; but in the circumstances he has till now kept silence. Perhaps it was the only or the safe course open to him. But he has committed another and even graver wrong than the one under discussion. He actually misinterpreted the author in order to make a stronger case against the Holy Prophet. When Professor Margoliouth was informed of this he proffered a very lame excuse. He said that he had followed, in his writings, a German translation of Wāqidī. This could only have been a subterfuge, seeing that he possessed every opportunity of access to the original text. In any case he should have corrected his mistake if he wished to maintain the reputation which he claims.

I admit that Wāqidī is a Muslim writer and not from an alien camp. But Muhammad is not the only person in history whose name has suffered at the hands of his own people. History has, in his case, merely repeated itself. Wellnigh all the great leaders of humanity have counted among their admirers men who in their zeal to extol their hero have injured that hero's reputation by introducing into their writings material which either had no foundation nor any authenticity, or came from their own imagination. The material they put into their works appealed to them according to their own taste and culture. But such writers are not always recorders of actualities. They do not faithfully give the picture of their hero as he was, but as they think he ought to be. Unfortunately this "ought to be" is only a creation of their own mind that received its mould either from its peculiar environment or the public opinion of the day, which is not necessarily an index of true morality and ethics. Krishna, the great prophet in ancient India, is perhaps a good illustration of this. We cannot but accept Krishna as a real messenger from the Almighty when we read most of the passages in his book *Bhagwad Gita* (Divine Song). He spent his whole life in crushing down evil, in the defence of good. But his own good name falls to the ground when we read of him in the Puranic Literature. A Messenger from God! and yet capable, as that record shows, of a complete disregard of moral laws. For instance, his affections stray after the wife of

another man, and his miraculous powers are used for concealing his amorous pursuits in her company in order to hoodwink the jealous husband. But this is all a lie, a scurrilous libel on the name of the great Prophet, though the nauseating narrative comes from those persons who worshipped Krishna as God. It only shows the mind of the period when these books were written. At that time the moral horizon of India had become overclouded with darkness. One word would suffice to give the reader an insight into the conditions then obtaining. Evil was taken as piety. The most wicked thing which, according to the Qur-án, stands next only to murder—illicit connection with others' womenkind—was committed in religious observances within the four walls of the House of God as an act of great merit. No wonder, then, if the writers of the time ascribed such actions to Krishna.

Some of the Judaic Prophets have received similar treatment from their own writers. Actions ascribed in the Old Testament to Lot, David, and even to Noah, are unworthy even of an average man, to say nothing of a Divine Messenger. The Qur-án really did a most valuable service to humanity in defending these righteous people of God, when it declared all of them to be innocent of the alleged offences. It is matter for rejoicing that present researches in the West have also pronounced the Bible to be folk-lore.

But the name of God, even, has become sullied in this way. Though He is the object of universal adoration, and all that is noble and good in the eye of His worshippers has always become focused in Him, yet whenever the conception of God is formed after man's own imagination and not from Divine sources, attributes given to Him are not ideals. Nay, they are often objectionable, for the reason I have explained above. The revengeful nature of the Jewish race becomes reflected in the Old Testament description of Jehovah; the libertine and self-indulgent character of the Greeks, Romans, and Indians in ancient times finds expression in the actions ascribed to the various gods in their respective Pantheons.

It is not a matter of surprise, therefore, that Wāqidī and some other writers of his class should have ascribed to the

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Holy Prophet such things as appealed to their martial spirit—the spirit of the ordinary soldier—though they were quite unable to substantiate their stories by reference to any trustworthy tradition relating to the Holy Prophet.

No pre-Islamic religion in the world has succeeded in maintaining the purity of its record; and if corruption had crept into Islam it would not have been astonishing. But Islam in its very early days produced a band of seekers after truth who at once set to work to forestall and remedy the evil. The Holy Qur-án, in alluding to human interpolation in other religions, warned Muslims against the possibility of such an occurrence in theirs. It put them on their guard. They became alive to the situation, especially when they beheld an extraordinarily huge influx of non-Arab races into Islam. This occurred towards the end of the first century of the Muslim era, and seemed to them to suggest a possibility of the corruption against which they had been warned. They therefore set themselves at once to fortify Islam against any such unnatural growth. They lost no time in locating the possible channels of corruption and made every possible effort to stem it. For brevity's sake I will content myself with the mention of two things in which they detected a special menace to the purity of Islam. First, the language itself—the vehicle of human thoughts; and secondly, the Traditions of the Holy Prophet. The changing nature of almost all the languages of the world has injured the integrity of ancient records more than anything else. Words in a language are constantly undergoing an imperceptible but rapid change—rapid-seeming, perhaps, because so imperceptible—both in form and meaning, in the course of time, and thus their original meanings are lost. Sometimes, too, new significance is given to them by succeeding generations—at least, the process of generalization or particularization in the connotation of words goes on incessantly. We may possess an original record of ancient days—in the very language of the time when the text was composed—but no one can be sure of the meaning he gives to the text in after days. Hindus assert that the Holy Vedas have reached them in the very language in which they were written by the

ancient Rishis. It may be so; but there are several translations of the Holy Vedas which differ diametrically from each other—and all because of the change of meaning which the Vedic words have undergone. Though Arabic is the most conservative language in this respect, yet the early Muslims began to raise a bulwark against this subtle attack. They began to prepare Arabic lexicons; in fact, herein is the genesis of all Arabic dictionaries. Among the lexicographers, Jauharī, a great scholar of the day, set himself to compile a dictionary of the Qur-ánic vocabulary, and to-day we possess a standard work on the subject in his book *Sihah-i-Jauharī*. All these lexicographers adopted one principle in ascertaining the meanings of words. They would give them only such meanings as they received in the works of ancient writers and poets. In selecting these authorities the compilers of the Arabic dictionaries confined their research only to authors living either before Muhammad or contemporaneously with him. It is chiefly for this reason that the words of the Qur-án, as well as of the Traditions, are understood in the same sense which they conveyed in the days of the Prophet—a thing unique and unparalleled in the history of Religion.

In collecting the Traditions the early Muslims were not less vigilant in ascertaining their genuineness. They evolved a science of criticism for testing the trustworthiness of the various recorders of the Prophet's sayings and doings. In the first place they would very rarely accept a tradition which had only one authority to support it. They would not rely on the report of any person who had been known to have made a false statement in his life, no matter how trivial the matter. They went farther than that; they declined to accept the authority of one who was known to have deviated once from the Qur-ánic moral standard even in other respects. They would make long journeys to ascertain the genuineness of one tradition. It would need a volume to tell adequately of the arduous methods which they adopted to achieve their high purpose. I will here allude only to one or two books of traditions, and the labour which the writers undertook in their preparation.

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Imám Mālik, the first writer on the subject, was born in 93 Hijra, in Medina. In his very early days he had meditated collecting the traditions. He sat at the feet of nine hundred masters for this object, and then he produced a collection of somewhat above one thousand traditions as the fruit of his life. He got seventy of the best scholars of his day in Medina to attest the correctness of his book, and named it *Mu'atta*. At the end of the second century (A.H.) another great traditionist, Muhammad son of Ismā'il, was born in Bukhāra. After finishing his course of studies he spent sixteen years in the work of collecting, and collected more than six hundred thousand traditions; but of these he chose only four thousand for his famous book *Sahīh Bukhārī*—a work that has won an everlasting fame for its genuineness.

The beginning of the third century saw the birth of another Imam, Imám Muslim by name. He also produced a collection, in which he gave twelve thousand traditions out of one hundred thousand which he had collected before he even began to write the work.

There are four other books, the preparation of which entailed similar labour and pains. These six books besides *Mu'atta* are called *Sīhāh Sittah* and are passed as standard works on the subject. They contain mostly the same traditions, and give a long list of the authorities in support of every tradition they mention. Could a decent writer on Islam stoop to Wāqidī and other fiction-writers in the presence of such a solid unimpeachable body of traditions? If Wāqidī, Ibn Hishām, Tabarī, Ibn Sa'd, and Halabī were not given the credit of trustworthiness, it was because their statements in many places received no corroboration from these books of *Hadīs* (Tradition). Nay, these writers contradict the said collections. We do not find even one tradition in the above books which goes to support the works of Wāqidī and his followers. Everything that came to these latter, whether true or false, was passed on to the readers. “Their works have not survived the ordeal of criticism which the collections of *Hadīs* have undergone.” “Let the students know,” so says Hāfiẓ Zainu 'd-din 'Irāqī, “that these biographies (books of Wāqidī

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and others) contain what is true and what is false." Ahmed-bin-Hanbal, when criticizing such works, says, "These books are not based on any principles." And what irony of fate! Wāqidi, the pet authority in our opponents' hands in Europe, "is the most untrustworthy of them all, and is generally known as a 'liar.'"

But Islam possesses another advantage over other religions, which is its exclusive acquisition. It is the Holy Qur-án, the only Revelation in the whole world of religion that can lay claim to unquestionable genuineness. It contains the true biography of the Holy Prophet. The Holy Book not only describes the most important events of his life, but also mirrors his whole character. It was proverbially said by his companions that the morals of the Prophet were those of the Qur-án. In illustrating passages of the Holy Qur-án, in many cases they would refer to his actions. They would similarly cite verses of the Holy Qur-án if they were asked about the conduct of the Prophet in any particular instance. All the injunctions of the Holy Qur-án received illustration in the actions of the Holy Prophet. He was the first among the faithful to obey every word of the Holy Book. Under these circumstances the early Muslims were quite justified in rejecting any statement concerning the Prophet, if it was contrary to the teachings of the Qur-án. Muhammad himself once remarked that a time would come in after days when words and actions that did not come from him would be ascribed to him. In this respect the Holy Prophet warned his followers to be against accepting anything about him that was contrary to the Holy Qur-án.

If we follow this his advice, we only do what is right. It is in obedience to his pronouncement that we reject Wāqidi and their like. The Qur-án is the best criterion of truth in our hands, and anything that does not stand its test is not to be accepted.

KHWAJA KAMAL-UD-DIN

PARTAP FARM BAGH

SHALIMAR GARDENS

SRINAGER, KASHMIR STATE

June 20, 1929

## SUFISM

### SUFISM (OR ISLAMIC MYSTICISM)

By PROFESSOR SYED MUZAFFARU 'D-DIN, M.A.

#### DERIVATION OF THE TERM "ŞŪFĪ"

THE term "Şūfi" is derived variously. The early Muslim scholars favoured its derivation from "Ahlu 'ş-Şuffâ" (i.e. the mendicants who passed their time close to the Prophet's Mosque). Jāmī and some others are inclined to derive the term from "Şafa" (i.e. purity). Some seek to connect the word "Şūfi" with the Greek word "σοφός." The most current view, however, is that the term "Şūfi" is derived from the word "Şūf," meaning "wool." The woollen garment was a symbol of the simplicity of life and renunciation of luxury. The Prophet of Islam (may peace be on him!) and a good many early Muslims preferred a simple dress to a gaudy one, even in favourable circumstances.

#### MEANING OF "WALĪ" AND "ŞŪFĪ"

So far the etymology of the term "Şūfi." Let us now turn to the word "Wali," as the two words (i.e. Şūfi and Wali) are frequently used synonymously. "Wali" means "near," and "Walā'it" signifies "nearness," or (as generally used) "nearness to God." Walā'it has two grades: One is meant for all the Believers, as the Qur-án says, "God is near (or friend to) those who believe and brings them out from darkness to light"<sup>1</sup>; and the other is reserved for those who annihilate themselves in God. The real "Wali," therefore, is he who lives in Him and dies in Him, i.e. who cuts himself off from the universe and loses himself in God. Ibrāhīm Adham once said to a person who had been desirous to be a "Wali," "Do not incline towards anything of this world or of the next and keep yourself confined to the exalted Lord and finally get absorbed in Him."

In the book *Qushairiyah* it is written that the word "Wali" can be taken in two senses: (a) It may be taken in the passive voice, meaning "he who is loved by God," as the

<sup>1</sup> Holy Qur-án, ii. 257.

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Qur-án says, "Verily, my friend is God who revealed the Book."<sup>1</sup> (b) The word may be taken in the active voice in the exaggerated form, signifying "he who loves the worship of and devotion to God."

Abū 'Abdullah Khafīf says, "Ṣūfī is he whom God has purified for His own self out of love." The term "Muṣṭafā" was applied to Muhammad, Prophet of God, because he was purified by the Divine Being and was His Chosen Prophet.

The Muslim commentators generally divide human beings into three classes:

- (1) The perfect beings, who have successfully reached the Destination.
- (2) The middle-class people, who are travelling along the road leading to the Destination.
- (3) The worthless men, who are at a standstill.

The first-class people, excepting Prophets and Divine Messengers, are subdivided into (a) the Ṣūfīs, who by following faithfully in the footsteps of Prophets have reached the Destination and have also taken to the noble mission of leading the masses to the right path; and (b) the Faqīrs (mendicants), who after attaining perfection make themselves disappear in oblivion.

A Ṣūfī is decidedly superior to a Faqīr or mendicant, inasmuch as the latter aims at attaining his end by means of poverty and renunciation of the world, while the former devises no ways and means for his end and is confident of achieving his objective in all circumstances alike. A Ṣūfī is so thoroughly absorbed in his goal that he cannot make a distinction between means and end. Moreover, a Ṣūfī, in addition to self-perfection, endeavours to perfect others by guiding them to the right course of action; while a mendicant minds his own business only.<sup>2</sup>

### SOURCE AND ORIGIN OF SUFISM

Now I proceed to the main question, viz. the source and

<sup>1</sup> Holy Qur-án, vii. 196.

<sup>2</sup> This portion is almost entirely borrowed from Jāmī's *Nafhātū'l- Uns*.

## SUFISM

origin of Sufism or Islamic mysticism. Opinions differ as the poles asunder. The oft-quoted views are the following<sup>1</sup>:

- (1) That Sufism owes its origin to Neoplatonic influence.
- (2) That Sufism is a reaction of the Aryan mind against a Semitic religion.
- (3) That Sufism has an independent origin.
- (4) That Sufism is an expansion of the esoteric form of the religion of Islam.

The object of the writer here is to prove that Sufism has not emerged from the Neoplatonic philosophy or the Aryan reaction. Nor has it grown independently. Sufism is only the natural evolution of the spiritual or mystical elements in which the Qur-án abounds and which have been frequently given expression to by the Founder of Islam. It was allegorical Qur-ánic verses and prophetic expressions that paved the way for the development of mysticism in Islam. The explanation of the term "Wali" or "Sūfi," as given above, proves by itself that "Sufism" cannot be anything but Islamic in essence.

Before I discuss the above-mentioned views as to the source of Sufism, it would be desirable to sketch the development of the movement from the very beginning of its existence, so as to enable the reader to judge for himself as to whether the Muslim divines responsible for the origination and development of Sufism derived their inspiration from the foreign sources or from their Holy Book. It must clearly be noted here that similarities between two doctrines or theories do not necessarily indicate that one is borrowed from the other. We cannot establish the relation of cause and effect between two similar theories unless we are backed up by historical evidence.

Professor R. A. Nicholson rightly observes:

"Since mysticism in all ages and countries is fundamentally the same, however it may be modified by its peculiar environment and by the positive religion to which it clings for support,

<sup>1</sup> *A Literary History of Persia*, by E. G. Browne.

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we find remote and unrelated systems showing an extraordinarily close likeness and even coinciding in many features of verbal expression. Such resemblances can prove little or nothing unless they are corroborated by evidence based on historical grounds."<sup>1</sup>

### BEGINNING OF SUFISM

It is generally assumed that Sufism came into being towards the close of the second or beginning of the third century of the Islamic era. It is this mistaken idea that leads the modern scholars to connect Sufism with the Greek philosophy, which had by that time begun to creep into the minds of some of the learned Muslims. The fact is that Sufism is as old as Islam itself. It was brought into being as soon as verses of the mystical cult were revealed to the Prophet. It cannot be denied by Arabic-knowing scholars that the Qur-án is here and there allegorical with mystical touch. Some of such verses may be interpreted both esoterically and exoterically, but there are others which cannot be taken in any light other than esoteric. A few instances will serve the purpose. The Qur-án says: "He (God) is first and last, visible and invisible, and He is the Knower of everything."<sup>2</sup> "God's hand was above their hands."<sup>3</sup> "When you shot the arrow it was not you who shot, but God shot."<sup>4</sup> "Every day He is in a new manifestation."<sup>5</sup>

Such verses emphatically prove that the universe with all its contents is merely a reflection of the Divine Being. Creations are only manifestations of that great Substance. God runs in the vein of man. Man is only a tool in the hands of the Deity, who utilizes him in any way He pleases. Whatever is spoken or done in the world apparently seems to proceed from the creation, but is inwardly originated by God Himself. It is the universe in which the Supreme Being manifests Himself and through which He is known to the

<sup>1</sup> *A Literary History of the Arabs* by Professor R. A. Nicholson, p. 384.

<sup>2</sup> Holy Qur-án, lvii. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, viii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xlvi. 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, lv. 29.

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world at large. It was a desire of self-expression on the part of God which ultimately persuaded Him to create the universe. In a Ḥadīth Qudsī, God said to the Prophet: "I was a hidden Treasure, and I desired to be known; and therefore I made the creation that I might be known." These mystical expressions are further corroborated by the Tradition, which says, "Whosoever knoweth himself knoweth his Lord."

Now it was this all-absorbing character of the Deity, given expression to in the Holy Book and Tradition, which served as the basis of the future theory of Pantheism (i.e. *Hama o st* = All is God) the central point of Ṣufism. All Ṣūfīs aim at annihilating themselves in the Creator, because they believe in their heart of hearts that He is the only Entity, a real Existence; while human beings and other creations are only reflections. This belief is derived from the verses quoted above. To turn to another fundamental principle of the movement, it is known to the student of Spiritualism that "Love" is the foundation-stone of Ṣufism. The Ṣūfīs attempt to soar to the highest High on the wings of love and devotion. This love must be pure and perfect, selfless and disinterested. Ṣūfīs love for love's sake only. This corner-stone of the mansion of Ṣufism was also furnished by the Qur-ān and Tradition. God says, "Tell (them) if you love God, follow me, God will love you."<sup>1</sup> "Those who believe have got exceeding love for God."<sup>2</sup> The Prophet says, "None has belief who does not love." "Man is with him whom he loves."

From the above quotations it can safely be inferred that the seed of Ṣufism was sown in the very beginning of Islam. The Prophet himself now and then displayed mystical inclinations, and not infrequently did he resort to some hidden place for meditation and devotion. He was often found in the state of complete absorption in his Lord. His intimate associates did not fail to imitate their leader. A section of the companions, ever since their acceptance of the Faith, had been mystical in tendency and ascetic in practice. They had cut themselves off from the worldly affairs and passed their time

<sup>1</sup> Holy Qur-ān, iii. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., ii. 165.

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in a portico of the Mosque of the Prophet in meditation, prayer, and devotion. They are known as "Ahlu 'ṣ-ṣūfā'" (people of the Bench), from which the word "Ṣūfī" was sought to be derived by the early Muslims. Though this derivation does not find favour with the European scholars, in my opinion it seems to be quite sound. Considering the ascetic life led by the Ahlu 'ṣ-ṣūfā', and comparing it with the practices of the Muslim mendicants (or Ṣūfīs), it is not unlikely that the latter received their inspiration from the former and that the term "Ṣūfī" was derived from the "Ahlu 'ṣ-ṣūfā'."

The early caliphs, who were the busiest rulers in the world, occasionally indulged in mystical expressions, denying existence to things other than God and ascribing every action of the universe to the Divine Hands. Mystical inclinations in the beginning were confined to a small section of the Believers only, the rest having been occupied in the construction work of Islam. As time went on and the Faith successfully spread far and wide, the Muslims were in a mood to develop speculative and idealistic spirit. They were stimulated by the great catastrophe that overtook the Muslim world during and after the reign of Caliph III. The unshakable unity of the Believers was shaken, universal brotherhood of Islam was shattered, swords were unsheathed, and Muslims began to break one another's heads. Mecca, Holy of the Holies, was sacked, and thousands of the Faithful were slaughtered. These horrors and atrocities accelerated the progress of quietism or asceticism in the pious sections of the Muslim community.

### THE EARLY STAGE OF SUFISM

Towards the close of the period of the Orthodox caliphate a group of God-fearing people sprang up, who had practically retired from the busy world. These Muslims, after renouncing all sorts of luxury and enjoyment, abandoned themselves to the Supreme Deity, to whom only they appealed for favour of protection against the inhuman atrocities in which the world had been then plunged. Slowly but steadily this group increased both in number and strength. They were speculative in tendency, meditative in inclination, and mystical in

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character. They had their stand on those verses of the Qur-án which characterize the world as vanishable and devotion to God as the highest glory for humanity. Neither had they been conversant with foreign languages, nor had they occasion to mix with the Greeks or Aryans, or with those who were known as Philosophers. They were too much absorbed in their Lord to think of other things. The seed of Şufism, therefore, was sown during the lifetime of the Prophet, and the plant grew stronger and stronger after the first century of the Islamic era had drawn to a close.

These meditative and ascetic Muslims were, to all intents and purposes, essentially Şūfis; it does not matter whether they were so entitled or not. The first Muslim, however, who is generally recognized as Şūfī is Imām Ḥasan Baṣrī. He was born at Medina, but settled at Baṣra. He had a vast knowledge of Islamic subjects in all their branches, which he had acquired from the members of the Prophetic Family. He combined in himself the requisite qualifications of a philosopher and a mystic. Unlike the present-day Şūfis he used to hold public lectures so as to benefit the seekers of knowledge. He was the teacher of Wāṣil b. ‘Atā, founder of the Rationalistic School of Islam. He died in 110 A.H. or 728 A.D.

Abū Hāshim (d. 162 A.H. or 777-8 A.D.) was an Arab of Kūfa and settled in Syria. Jāmī considers him as the first devotee who was given the title of Şūfī. Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Adham, who renounced the throne of Balkh for the attainment of spiritual perfection, was a mystic of great note. He died in 161 A.H. or 777 A.D. Rābi'a is indisputably regarded as one of the greatest saints and Şūfis the world has produced. Her expressions, full of mystical ideas, are still fresh in the minds of the Spiritualists. She died in 160 A.H. or 776 A.D., a year earlier than Ibrāhīm b. Adham. Needless to say that these saints had nothing to do with Greek or Aryan philosophy.

### NEXT STAGE OF ŞUFISM

The second stage begins with Ma'rūf Karkhī (son of Firoz or Firozan) who died in 200 A.H. or 815 A.D. He was a client and disciple of Imām ‘Alī b. Mūsā al-Ridā, to whom he owed

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all his learning and accomplishment. He was a saint, pure and simple. He retired from the world and lost himself in communion with the Creator. Ma'rūf Karkhī was soon followed by one who is universally regarded as a pillar of the Islamic mysticism, i.e. Abu 'l-Fayd Thawbān b. Ibrāhīm Dhu 'n-Nūn Miṣrī. He died in 245 A.H. or 859-60 A.D. To him is ascribed the authorship of the mystical theories and doctrines. He was a profound scholar—both a mystic and a philosopher. The keynote of his mystical ideas is, "The man that knows God best is the one most lost in Him." Ecstasy (Wajd) is, in his opinion, the only means of acquiring the knowledge of God. The central point of his teachings is "Devotion to and absorption in the Creator."

### THE FINAL STAGE OF ȘUFISM

We now pass on to Bāyazīd (or Abū Yazīd) of Bisṭām, who was a contemporary of Dhu 'n-Nūn Miṣrī. He made some improvements on the existing condition of mysticism by introducing therein the doctrine of self-effacement or self-annihilation. This doctrine was really the logical consequence of absorption or Ecstasy taught by Dhu 'n-Nūn Miṣrī. Bāyazīd declared that unless a man loses himself in God he has no chance of knowing Him. So long as a man is conscious of his own self he cannot obtain a clue to the Divinity. These two ideas of self-annihilation and absorption taught by Bāyazīd and Dhu 'n-Nūn paved the way for the development of the theory of Pantheism in Islamic mysticism. When man is to destroy himself and merge in the Creator in order to know Him, a stage must be reached when the distinction between the Creator and created, Maker and made, Master and slave, disappears. From the above it is clear that all the three stages of Șufism—ascetic, theosophical, and pantheistic—directly or indirectly evolved from the Islamic elements themselves.

In the first three or four centuries of the Islamic era there was no external difference between a secular scholar and a mystic. Both the groups of the Faithful were equally prompt to observe all the injunctions and dogmas of the religion of Islam in theory as well as practice. Junayd of

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Baghdād (*d.* 297 A.H. or 909 A.D.), one of the most celebrated Ṣūfīs, was very anxious to see that the Believers, one and all, were following the secular and spiritual aspects of Islam alike. He emphasized that "the external path (i.e. *Shari'at*) and internal path (*Haqīqat*) of Islam are essentially the two sides of the same thing, and that they, far from being antagonistic, corroborate each other." It was Junayd who systematized the mystical doctrines and put them in black and white.

It was, however, reserved for Ghazzālī to popularize mysticism among various sections of the Muslim community by reconciling it with the external laws of the religion (*Shari'at*). It was he who harmonized between the esoteric and exoteric forms of the Faith and succeeded in effecting a cordial relation between the adherents of the two branches of the same religion.

### SPLIT IN THE ṢŪFĪ RANK

The degeneration of Ṣufism commenced when the two halves (external and internal) of Islam were separated. The later Ṣūfīs became too mystical to think of the exoteric side, just as the secular scholars were too much immersed in their business to care for the esoteric side of the Faith. This degeneration was complete when saints began to constitute themselves into a separate body, with its branches spread all over the world. This body in course of time was split into a large number of schools, each having its own monastery and code of laws. The four principal schools of Ṣufism, named after their leaders, from which many sub-schools have emerged, are: (1) Quādiriyah (after Abdu 'l-Qādir Jilānī, *d.* 562 A.H. or 1166 A.D.), (2) Naqshbandiah (after Bahā'u 'd-Dīn Naqshband, *d.* 791 A.H.), (3) Chishtiyah (after Khawja Mu'īnu 'd-Dīn Chistī, died at Ajmere in 663 A.H. or 1265 A.D.), and (4) Suharwardiyah (after Shihabu 'd-Dīn Suharwardy, *d.* 632 A.H.).

### REVIEW OF VARIOUS STAGES

As Ṣufism made no progress after Ghazzālī worth recording, let us halt here and analyse the chief stages of Islamic mysticism and refer to the real source from which they derived their inspiration.

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To be brief, Islamic mysticism in its early stage was very simple. It was only asceticism, consisting mainly in puritanical abstinence from luxury and enjoyment. It was a passage of life in a self-denying manner. The Prophet and early caliphs were puritans to the extreme, denying all sorts of luxury, despite their capacity to indulge therein. By this self-restraint they desired to keep their hearts pure and unmolested by the lust of the corrupted world. For the inspiration of the ascetic life led by a good many Muslims in early times it would be simply ridiculous to refer to any foreign source. The verses of the Qur-án, and the pieces of Traditions (quoted above), and the practices of the Prophet, were the chief inspirations to the ascetic life, not to speak of the companions of the Prophet. Abū Hāshim (*d.* 162 A.H.) and the saints who preceded him could not dream of the Greek or Aryan philosophy. Seldom did their knowledge pass beyond the confines of Islamic subjects. It was their religious learning coupled with meditation and devotion which enabled them to develop an ascetic tendency.

Here we quote Al-Qushayrī (*d.* 466 A.H. or 1073 A.D.) as rendered into English by the late Professor E. G. Browne:

“ Know that after the death of the Apostle of God the most excellent of the Muslims were not at the time distinguished by any distinctive name save in regard to their companionship with the Apostle, seeing that there existed no greater distinction than this; wherefore they were called the ‘Companions.’ And when those of the second period came in contact with them, such of these as had held converse with the ‘Companions’ were named the ‘Followers,’ a title which they regarded as of the noblest. Then those who succeeded them were called ‘Followers of the Followers.’ Thereafter men differed, and diverse degrees became distinguished, and the elect of mankind, who were vehemently concerned with matters of religion, were called *Ascetics* and *Devotees*. Then heresies arose, and there ensued disputes between the different sects, each one claiming to possess ‘*Ascetics*,’ and the elect of the people of the Sunna (the Sunnites), whose souls were set on God, and who guarded their hearts from the disasters

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of heedlessness, became known by the name of 'Şūfīs,' and this name became generally applied to these great men a little before the end of the second century of the Flight."

The above quotation leaves no room for doubt as to the origin of asceticism and Şufism. Those Muslims who were seriously occupied in religious works were known as "ascetics," and those whose souls were devoted to the Creator were termed "Şūfīs." And these titles had been generally applied before the second century of the Islamic era came to a close, i.e. long before the Muslim scholars had taken up the study of Greek or any other foreign philosophy. In the light of these observations, can it be said with rhyme or reason that Şufism is the product of a foreign element?

To turn now to the theosophical aspect of Şufism, Ma'rūf Karkhī (*d.* 200 A.H.) is generally admitted to have developed asceticism into theosophy, though it was further enlarged by Dhu 'n-Nūn Mişrī. Ma'rūf Karkhī, as we have seen before, was a client and disciple of Imām 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Riḍā; and it is wellnigh certain that all he learned was due to his close association with the holy Imām. During the time under review, members of the Prophetic Family were the right persons to explain the esoteric side of Islam. It was the said Imām in whose presence he embraced the Faith, and it was his company which infused into his mind the spiritual significance of the religion. He was further influenced by an earlier contemporary, Dāwood Tayy (*d.* 165 A.H.), who was a Şūfī of some note. There is no evidence to prove that Ma'rūf ever came under the influence of the Philosophers.

Dhu 'n-Nūn Mişrī completed the development of theosophy started by Ma'rūf Karkhī. Jāmī, in his book *Nafhātu 'l- Uns*, says that Dhu 'n-Nūn's father was a client of the Quraysh and himself was a disciple of Imām Mālik b. Anas, founder of one of the four Orthodox Schools of the Sunni Sect. He read the Imām's world-known Tradition book *Mu'atta* with him and followed his school. He also acquired learning from Isrāfil, who was recognized as a saint and Şūfī. Dhu 'n-Nūn's association with the greatest Traditionist of the time and other divines strongly contributed to his knowledge of the inner

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meanings of the Qur-án and Ḥadīth, which plunged him in speculation and meditation. We have no record to show that Dhu 'n-Nūn ever learnt the Greek or Aryan philosophy.

The last stage of Ṣufism is Pantheism. Though Abū Yazīd Bistāmī had the credit of developing Pantheism in Islam, its elements had long been in existence. Scarcely had there been a true Ṣūfī or Wālī who was not pantheistic in tendency. The sayings of some early Ṣūfīs will illustrate the proposition. Rābi'a Baṣrī, who flourished in the first half of the second century of the Muslim era, is credited with the following<sup>1</sup>:

The best thing that leads man on to God is that he must not care for any thing of this world or the next other than God.

Engagement in the world is the abandonment of God. Every thing bears fruit, and the fruit of knowledge is absorption in God.

Once Rābi'a saw the Prophet in a dream, who asked her, "O Rābi'a, dost thou love me?" "O Apostle of God," replied she, "who is there who loveth thee not? But the love of God hath so taken possession of every particle of my being that there is no room left me to love or hate anyone else."<sup>2</sup> Ma'rūf Karkhī has said:

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Love is not to be acquired by education. It is a God-given blessing.<sup>3</sup>

Three signs distinguish the saints: (a) their thought is of God, (b) their dwelling is with God, and (c) their business is in God.<sup>4</sup>

All these sayings are pantheistic in essence. Abū Yazīd Bistāmī simply systematized these scattered gems into a necklace. His grandfather, originally a Zoroastrian, became a convert to Islam—a fact which is cited by some Orientalists to prove that Bistāmī's pantheistic mysticism was influenced

<sup>1</sup> Jāmī.

<sup>2</sup> *Attar*, E. G. Browne.

<sup>3</sup> Jāmī.

<sup>4</sup> Professor R. A. Nicholson.

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by the Persian philosophy. As a matter of fact, Bāyazīd was brought up in a Muslim environment and never dreamt of Zoroastrianism, denounced by his grandfather. His contemporaries were Aḥmad Khuzrawiyah, Abū Hafṣ, and Yaḥyā b. Ma'ādh. He had the company of Shaqīq b. Ibrāhīm Balkhī, a prominent Ṣūfī of the time, who was a Traditionist and a disciple of Imām Zofar. Bāyazīd based his theory of Pantheism on the verses of the Qur-án, some of which are given below:

"To Him belongs command and to Him you will return." <sup>1</sup>

"Everything will get back to God." <sup>2</sup>

"We are from God and unto Him we return." <sup>3</sup>

Professor R. A. Nicholson, in his attempt to prove that the theosophical Ṣūfism is the product of Greek speculation, says: "Ma'rūf al-Karkhī, Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī, and Dhu 'n-Nūn al-Miṣrī all three lived in the period (786-861 A.D.) which begins with the accession of Hārūn al-Rashīd and is terminated by the death of Mutawakkil. During these seventy-five years the stream of Hellenic culture flowed unceasingly into the Muslim world. Innumerable works of Greek philosophers, physicians, and scientists were translated and eagerly studied. Thus the Greeks became the teachers of Arabs, and the wisdom of ancient Greece formed, as has been shown in a preceding chapter, the basis of Mohammedan science and philosophy."

I disagree here with the learned Professor. In the first place it is not correct to say that the stream of Hellenic culture flowed unceasingly into the Muslim world during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd. Far from encouraging the study of Greek philosophy or patronizing the Muslim Rationalists, Hārūn took every possible measure to ban the diffusion of Hellenic culture in the Muslim Empire. Rationalists were sent to prison, and order was issued that no book should be written on philosophy.<sup>4</sup> As a matter of fact, during his reign (786-808 A.D.) and that of his successor Amīn (808-13 A.D.),

<sup>1</sup> Holy Qur-án, xxviii. 88.      <sup>2</sup> Ibid., iii. 28.      <sup>3</sup> Ibid., ii. 155.

<sup>4</sup> 'Ilmu 'l-Kalām, by Shibli—taken from Jalālu 'd-Dīn Suyūtī and Sharh-Milal-wa 'n-Nihāl.

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nothing substantial was done for the popularity of Greek philosophy among the Muslims. It was only Māmūn (813-33 A.D.) who popularized the study of philosophy and science among his subjects and who enforced rationalism throughout his empire. But then the Greek works translated into Arabic were still Greek to the average Muslim. Only philosophically minded scholars could understand the Hellenic ideas at that time. It was Fārābī (d. 950 A.D.) who simplified the Greek works for the Muslims. Now Ma'rūf al-Karkhī (the founder of the theosophical school of Ṣūfīs) died in 815 A.D., only two years after Māmūn's accession, and so foreign influence in his case was out of the question. Abū Sulaymān al-Dārānī died in 830 A.D. He was a native of a village named "Dārān," in Damascus, and there he lies buried. He was a silent devotee, passing his days in meditation and devotion. He had never an occasion to come in contact with any philosopher or scientist of the time, nor had philosophy or rationalism spread beyond the confines of Baghdaḍ by that time. Baitu 'l-Hikmat, the well-known philosophical academy of Māmūn, was founded after the death of Abū Sulaymān. Dhu 'n-Nūn Miṣrī, of course, flourished during and after the reign of Māmūn, and could profit by Hellenic culture easily if he so wished. But the accounts of his life, as we find in Jāmī's book (one of the most reliable on the subject), do not justify the assertion that he was carried away by the Hellenic influence. His sayings, as those of other Ṣūfīs, are substantially Islamic and do not betray any foreign element.

In the second place, admitting for argument's sake that Hellenic culture flowed into the Muslim world during the whole period under review, what is the proof that the saints originally responsible for the development of Ṣūfīsm were also Hellenized? What is the evidence to show that Greek philosophy passing through secular scholars penetrated also into the closets of the saints who had been absorbed in the Divinity? During the period, Baghdaḍ and its neighbouring towns only were under the influence of Greek culture and science, and the distant parts of the empire were little influenced by them. The above-named Ṣūfīs, obviously, were

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not affected by the foreign culture. In the absence of a positive proof, therefore, it is far from right to assert that Islamic mysticism is a product of Greek or any other foreign culture.

All that can be said in favour of the contention that Sufism has a non-Islamic or foreign origin is that some doctrines of Sufism resemble the Neoplatonic or Vedanta theories; but in the words of Professor Nicholson himself (which have been already quoted above), "Such resemblances can prove little or nothing unless they are corroborated by evidence based on historical grounds," "as mysticism in all ages and countries is fundamentally the same."

### ARGUMENTS SUMMED UP

In the foregoing lines I have endeavoured to prove that Sufism is an Islamic movement which has emerged from the Qur-án and Tradition. Now I sum up the main arguments advanced above.

(1) The etymological meaning and true significance of the terms "Wali" and "Sūfi," as given above, clearly point out that Sufism cannot be anything but Islamic. Junayd held that "the Sūfi system of doctrine is firmly bound with the Dogmas of the Faith and the Qur-án."

(2) The Qur-án repeatedly asserts that from the Deity everything has originated and to the Deity everything will ultimately return. He only is eternal, and the rest is short-lived and transient, e.g. "Everything is perishable except His Essence. To Him belongs command and to Him you will turn."<sup>1</sup> Such verses are undoubtedly pantheistic in essence.

(3) God and Prophet have attached great importance to "Love," inasmuch as "belief" itself has been made conditional on and subservient to love.<sup>2</sup> Belief cannot be complete without Love of God and Prophet. The student of Spiritualism knows that love is the central point of mysticism.

(4) Renunciation of luxury is enjoined on the Believers, and the Prophet has expressed his pride in "poverty," as he

<sup>1</sup> Holy Qur-án, xxviii. 88.

<sup>2</sup> Tradition: "None has belief who has not got love."

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says "Poverty is my pride." This self-denial is the foundation-stone of the ascetic Ṣufism.

(5) The companions of "Ṣuffa" (who passed their ascetic lives in a portico attached to the Mosque) stimulated the development of asceticism and meditation among the Muslims. The Tradition "Whosoever knoweth himself knoweth his Lord" was the chief guide in the matter.

(6) The early caliphs and some other companions were extremely devoted to God and His Prophet, placing at their disposal all they possessed, including their lives. This self-less devotion and sacrifice paved the way for the future evolution of self-annihilation in the domain of Ṣufism.

The above points distinctly show that Ṣufism is an expansion of Islamic doctrines and practices, and has nothing to do with foreign elements.

There is another consideration. It is universally admitted that the saints responsible for the development of Ṣufism sought to get absorbed in God, and aimed at attaining to the Divine Being. Now it is quite unlikely that for the realization of that divine aim they would turn, not to the Book of God, but to the Hellenic philosophy.

### OTHER THEORIES

Now only a few words are needed for the refutation of the theory of Greek or Aryan origin of Ṣufism. The student of Islamic culture knows that in the first and second centuries of the Islamic era the Muslim intellects were too fully occupied in religious learning to think of foreign culture. Poetry, which had been a passion with the pagan Arabs, was discarded for the time being in favour of theology and sciences connected therewith. Some Muslims began to study and understand the Neoplatonic philosophy during the reign of Caliph Māmūn, i.e. in the third century of the Islamic era. A number of books were translated from Greek into Arabic during his time and Mansur's, but these translations were only transformations. Misconceptions and misunderstandings were the only consequence. This state continued down to the time of Fārābī

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(d. 950 A.D.). The early saints, therefore, could not be expected to understand the Greek philosophy, much less assimilate it in the theories of mysticism. The Ṣūfīs, coming after, only followed in the footsteps of their predecessors. By the time (tenth century A.D.) the Greek philosophy was easily understood and appreciated by the general Muslim intellect, Ṣufism had neared its completion. Moreover, we have seen already that Ṣufism is as old as Islam itself. It is only an aspect, esoteric, of the great religion. Its development began, though slowly, during the lifetime of the Prophet himself.

The study of Aryan culture (Indian or Persian) by the Muslims also commenced in earnest during the reign of the celebrated Caliph Māmūn. What, therefore, has been said to refute the theory of Greek origin of Ṣufism can equally be said to repudiate the theory of Aryan origin of the same.

To turn to the question of the independent origin of Ṣufism, we have seen above that all saints and sheikhs sanctified their minds and their business by an exceeding love of and devotion to God and by seeking inspiration from His Book and the sayings of His Prophet. We have given quotations already from the Qur-án and Tradition, from which Ṣufism has emerged, and in the face of these it is absurd to assume that Ṣufism has grown independently of Islam.

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## THE PURDAH (VEIL) SYSTEM AMONGST THE MUSLIMS OF INDIA

By MISS R. NIAZ HUSAIN, B.A., B.T.

THE world's history shows that the custom of the seclusion of women was anciently observed by all the great nations both of the East and of the West. Under the laws of Greece a woman lived a secluded and strictly indoor life, not being allowed to go out unless in case of necessity. In Rome father or husband treated the woman as his slave and had absolute power over her. Similar was the status of woman in China and Korea. In England, even until comparatively recently, woman lived a far more secluded life than she does to-day. The Persians also kept their women under close surveillance.

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The idea of seclusion was, in the beginning, the outcome of new tendencies towards the mitigation of the brutal aspects of life and of a sense of chivalry towards the weaker sex. With the advance of civilization, man began to realize the virtue and the value of woman. In Asia this idea of woman's purity became the ruling sentiment in man, and the custom of seclusion came into existence as a safeguard. Strictest purdah in India was the result of political disturbances and of the insecure conditions to which they gave rise. Muslims, in order to save women from any risk of disrespect, did not permit them even to go about veiled, as was the custom in their own country. On the other hand the Hindus, in order to protect more thoroughly those of noble birth and to provide their women with a measure of security against the power of the foreigners, also followed the practice of secluding women and ordaining for them an indoor life.

In the West the pendulum swung back, and since the idea of respect for women was not so highly developed there as in Asia, or strictly speaking in India, the West has been able to get rid of the custom of seclusion, largely as a result of the Woman's Suffrage movement. India was left unaffected, to all intents and purposes, by this new phenomenon of the twentieth century, largely because her mind has been occupied in ridding herself of many other greater evils before she can devote her full attention to the improvement of social conditions.

The purdah system in India to-day is not the purdah which we had in the last century. There has been a vast change even during the last fifteen years. I remember well that fifteen years ago women on the whole enjoyed their life in purdah in their own homes, far from the worries of the outer world. The female section of the house was generally a large building staffed by a number of servants, maids, etc., and the wife would live a jolly and a happy life with the family, all the members of which formed a united whole, having their amusements, festivals, etc., in common.

The present-day condition of India, which can be shortly described as progress in a vicious circle of which the outstanding characteristic is poverty, has deprived women of all

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this jolly life of contentment, and replaced their big establishments by dwellings which are a centre of every form of discontent. Owing to the fact that many families cannot afford to observe purdah life (for a life of poverty in purdah is no better than life in prison—and that is not a thing to be desired) they have either partly or wholly done away with strict purdah. Some educated families, under the influence of Western civilization, have even gone so far as to give up purdah, considering it an obstacle to progress. A large proportion of the Indian population is rural, and, generally speaking, purdah does not exist in the villages. In the cities the servant class has to give it up simply because of the bread-and-butter problem. A comparatively few rich families who cling to the old ideal and can afford to keep servants still enjoy purdah in the sense in which it was enjoyed fifteen years ago. The situation, however, of the middle-class woman of the cities of North India is a most difficult one. This is the class that on the whole cannot afford to live a good purdah life; yet the idea that purdah life is respectable is, for all that, an urge in them to favour it. On the one hand they would prefer to lead a respectable purdah life; on the other, like all human beings they desire to enjoy life as best they may. The result is that this desire to lead an enjoyable as well as a respectable life with as little expense as possible makes their whole existence a ridiculous game of hide-and-seek to those who do not rightly understand their situation; for they observe purdah wherever and whenever they think they ought to, and generally drop it the moment they think they need not worry.

It would be better if I state something of the life led by an ordinary purdah girl of the middle class. According to family custom she is put in purdah sometimes at as early an age as seven, and often when nine. This means that she must not go out, and must hide herself from any man but a close relative. The house is generally a very small one, and has to contain a family of about seven or eight with one servant as cook. When she goes to visit friends she must be chaperoned by her mother or some elderly person of the family. The means of conveyance for short distances are *dolies*, which

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are very much like the sedan chair of the eighteenth century in England—the difference being that the *doli* has to be covered by a thick cloth, so that no one from outside can see the lady within. She may peep out, but only to an extent so little that no one must have the remotest idea that she is doing so; for if any man in the street happens to catch the slightest glimpse of her face, people would begin questioning her morals, and stories regarding her character would become rife. This sort of visiting generally means her transfer from one house to the other. Of course outings, in the Western sense of the word, are to her a thing unknown. If she happens to be a schoolgirl (which is rarely the case) she may have a chance to play about in the school grounds with a certain degree of freedom, otherwise it is always considered best to maintain strict supervision by her elders.

Modern psychological research has brought to light the critical significance of the age of eleven and onwards. There is a definite emotional and temperamental break, accompanied by temporary mental instability, the ruling emotion being that of positive self-realization, which is expressed in everything she does. She is conscious of a widening of both mental and physical horizons, and natural curiosity takes on an emotional shape. What she needs at this time is wise guidance, the direction of her emotional energy into channels where it is legitimate and useful both for her and for society, and not stupid scoldings and the crushing of her growing energy by undiscerning authority, which may lead to contra-suggestibility and further still to an attitude of rebellion. If the girl is of the passive type she may develop an inferiority complex accompanied by a pessimistic outlook on life. Her normal modes of behaviour will be humble, modest, and rather quiet, yet easily excitable, subject to shocks, and most probably during the age from fourteen to eighteen (if not married) having an hysterical reaction to the stimuli of shocks; after marriage dread of her husband and his family, and, as she grows older, heart troubles. What has always been most pathetic is the fact that the mother does not realize at all the effects of her own unwisdom. In fact, when the child appears humble,

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modest, and quiet she is glad that the girl is so obedient and feels proud of her, thinking that she will make a good wife and an obedient daughter-in-law.

If, however, the girl is of an active type she becomes contra-suggestible. Since authority is always present to crush her, she takes no rash steps, but quietly works against authority (if she becomes rebellious she is openly so). Since, generally speaking, the effort of the mother is in two directions—the imposing of purdah and marriage—the girl, in ninety-nine out of a hundred cases, would rebel against *one* at least of these impositions. As I turn the pages of my memory and experience it is curious that I do not find one single case of a girl rebelling against both. The position is generally this: If she rebels against marriage it is mostly because she desires education (as a rule girls interested in education and social welfare do so rebel), and steps are very wisely taken to meet the case. She realizes that if she also breaks away from purdah, not she, but her school and her beloved education will be blamed, which fact will in its turn deter parents from sending their daughters to school. If chance favours her she can do and does much for her community. When she gives up purdah it is after mature consideration only, either when she comes to England or when she feels sure that she can do a great deal of social good without it.

If she rebels against purdah she is not reluctant to accept marriage. The process here is absolutely clear, for when she rebels against purdah she is really striving to break off the chains that limit her so-called liberty to the four walls of her house. The steps for breaking these heavy chains are taken in a rebellious mood, and in most cases the girl has received little education and does not really understand the meaning of liberty. So at this stage her blindness is twofold—emotional, and that arising from lack of education, which entails an absence of any definite ideal, accompanied by the feeling that she needs someone who can sympathize with her and is also able to keep her financially. Moreover, the mother supports her in the idea of marriage because she thinks this the best remedy at this stage. At the age of thirteen, fourteen, or fifteen,

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according to the circumstances, she is married. Her husband, already a grown man, accustomed to enjoying his life and freedom and knowing practically all the virtues and vices of the world, judges her by his own standard, and tries to correct her, not by love, but by authority, forbidding her to go anywhere without his permission. A wish to enjoy life urges the girl to go, let us say, to some ladies' social club and she is not sure whether her husband will allow her. (Unfortunately the purdah system has produced such a gap between men's and women's societies that an average middle-class man is ignorant of the nature of the ladies' club and in most cases suspects the moral tone of the place; whereas women esteem it highly.) The girl smells a rat, as the English saying has it. She must go, therefore, from her mother's house, thus keeping her visit a secret from her husband. She meets many ladies at the club, and among them a Mrs. Z., let us say, her husband's friend's wife. The latter, ignorant of the scheme, casually mentions the meeting to Mr. Z. Mr. Z. is glad, and hastens to tell the girl's husband how delighted Mrs. Z. was to meet his wife at the ladies' club. The husband does not like it, and when his wife returns home he, just making use of his worldly knowledge, begins to cross-examine her as to her doings. She, fearful lest he be angry with her, tries to keep her visit a secret. A quarrel is the result, not only between husband and wife, but also between the families of the one and of the other, with still further happenings, which may be different in different cases, and the upshot of it all is an unhappy home.

My friends should keep in view that in India amongst Muslims the only popular and reputable mode of life is a married life. Also that a woman's life in other spheres of activity is zero, owing to purdah. When this married life proves unhappy it causes sorrow—sorrow not only on account of an unhappy home, but a comprehensive sorrow involving also difficulties even as to livelihood for the woman.

Purdah in India is without doubt a social curse.

Religion can hardly be blamed. In the whole of the Holy Qur-án we find only two passages that can have any bearing whatever on purdah. They are the following:

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I. Chapter xxiv, verses 30 and 31:

“Say to the believing men that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts; that is purer for them; surely Allah is Aware of what they do.”

“And all the believing women that they cast down their looks and guard their private parts and not display their ornamants except what appears thereof. . . .”

*Comments.*—It is evident that the casting down of looks and guarding of private parts *equally* prescribed for men and women is as a preventive against evil in *mixed* societies; for if women were kept in seclusion far from the sight of any man, casting down of eyes both for men and women would have been meaningless. *Zinat* (ornament) means, largely, external adornments, but even if it includes beauty of body it is permissible for women to keep hands and face uncovered by the expression “what appears thereof.”

II. The second passage is from the section on “those who spread evils.”

Chapter xxxiii, verse 59: “O Prophet! say to your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers that they let down upon them their overgarments; this will be more proper, that they may be known, and thus they will not be given trouble; and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.”

*Comments.*—The verse is with reference to the time. It was an age of brutal power and slavery. The Holy Qur-án refers to the evil and cruelty prevailing and seeks for the remedy. This special passage gives an injunction to wear overgarments with an object that free, chaste, and respectable women may be distinguished from slaves, so that they may not be annoyed and followed by men inclined to evil.” (Cf. the Holy Qur-án with English translation by Maulvi Muhammad ‘Ali, M.A., LL.B.)

It is now clear that the kind of purdah existing in India is not what the Holy Qur-án prescribes. It was the outcome of social chaos, and was supported by its enthusiasts to such an extent as to make it a rigid custom. The Holy Qur-án only prescribes the spirit of purdah (chastity) which should exist in every heart and in every respectable society.

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I favour the abolition of purdah as it exists in India to-day, and advocate a true Muslim purdah within the heart of everyone—both in man and woman. This will help to enlighten their lives socially, physically, and materially. By providing greater chances of social intercourse it will help the Muslim girl and her Hindu sister to understand each other, and to unite in action for the betterment of their common country. The other day, when I spoke at the London Muslim Prayer House, at 111 Campden Hill Gate, London, W. 8, my friends asked me whether the abolition of purdah for India would not mean the establishment of the Western mode of life, which they thought to be low in its moral tone. I wonder if anyone can give a *satisfactory* proof of the assertion that proportionally the Western mode of life is more deficient in moral tone than that of India. Personally I am inclined to the belief that good and bad are two aspects of life which cannot be eliminated from any nation or country; that is to say, we always find a certain number of good people and also of bad people everywhere; which being so, we cannot truthfully make any such general statement as that of asserting that the Western mode of life is low in its moral tone. The question splits into two possible ones: (1) If purdah is abolished will India incline to the Western mode of life? (2) Will the abolition of purdah be followed by morally low results?

As to the first question, the phrase "Western mode of life" is much too wide, and the length of this article does not permit me to deal with this question in any fullness or detail. On the whole, many people will agree that Western life is in certain of its aspects more scientific, more hygienic, and more civilized than Indian. We Indians need to learn a great deal from the West. Generally speaking, those who dislike the Western way of living give two arguments in support of their dislike, to wit, evening dresses and certain forms of dancing. It is not my aim here to consider the merits and demerits of either of the two. Neither of them is likely to have influence one way or the other on pure Indian society, owing to the fact that Indian progress has been slow in speed and evolutionary in form, and therefore every step is taken after long

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consideration. Western progress has been rapid in speed and revolutionary in form, and therefore the inclination is towards hasty and extreme steps. Ideas spring up in the West, and by the time India begins to consider whether she should follow the West in any particular idea it has already begun to fade. The first steps towards copying a Western idea are taken by the Anglicized communities of India, and it is either not copied fully or copied in practice without the ideal behind it. This makes the practice rather distasteful to pure Indians, who either begin to criticize it from a destructive standpoint or to reform it, using their own initiative and ideal, with the result that either it falls into disfavour and disappears in Indian society, or it is established in terms of Indian ideals, without much influencing the Anglicized community to any deep extent.

My answer to the second question is that the abolition of purdah will be a blessing ultimately, not only socially, but nationally, if it is done in the right way. It should be abolished slowly, the process of its abolition keeping pace with the advancement of true national education. Girls and boys, especially boys, need first of all to aspire to the ideals of self-respect and dignity. One of my friends in the meeting at the Muslim Prayer House suggested that the Government should abolish purdah, and that if Lord William Bentinck was able to do away with *satee*, which was a very difficult thing to do, why should the British Government of India be unable to cope with the problem of purdah, which is relatively easy?

No doubt the Government could do so, but what I would demand from the authorities is compulsory primary education (to begin with) suited to the needs of our country. Educational centres for mothers should be established. (The scheme for such centres has already been submitted by me in outline to the municipality of Delhi, and it is one of my ambitions to see that this is properly done.) This will go far towards solving the whole problem, because it will be a help for boys and girls in the building up of true ideals. The need for doing away with purdah will then become a natural urge. This is what I mean by the "right way" of abolishing purdah.

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Immediately following its abolition certain mistakes may be committed by those who already do not hesitate to live below the moral standard of life, but I dare say that the total of misbehaviour will be far less than that which exists at present in the realm of purdah (compare the total of misbehaviour amongst the Hindu non-purdah community proportionally with that in the Muslim purdah community). The first generation is bound to face a measure of difficulty, but the path will be smoothed for the generation to follow. In fact, the abolition of the present-day existing purdah will pave the way for a natural establishment of purdah in the true sense; for it will teach both men and women the value and limits of freedom. It will prevent the abuse of freedom by young men who, under the impression that their wives within the house cannot come to know what they do in the world, go so far in the use of that freedom as to abuse it. It will make women more dignified and respectable in their behaviour, because henceforth their actions will not be private but social.

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### THE LONDON NIZAMIAH MOSQUE TRUST FUND

By LORD HEADLEY

MANY of our Muslim friends, as well as Christian sympathizers in the East and West, are aware that I have succeeded in fixing upon an excellent site for the London Nizamiah Mosque. The selection has taken rather a longer time than I had anticipated, but this is hardly to be wondered at, seeing the number of plots in various parts of London which had to be examined and the pros and cons in each case carefully weighed. The site ultimately chosen by myself and His Highness the Aga Khan and Sir Abbas Ali Baig is particularly well situated within a few minutes' walk of West Kensington Station on the District Railway, close to a capital taxi rank, and admirably served by the 28 Service of omnibuses, which actually pass the door.

The area of this site is a little under 50,000 square feet,

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and there are many pretty trees, which we hope to save for the beautifying of the garden, with its little ornamental water with fountains and lilies. The price I eventually paid was £28,000, and this is very reasonable and far less than was asked for many much less attractive sites which we inspected. Also, when one considers that the value of land is rapidly increasing in the West of London, I cannot help feeling that we have secured a bargain.

The next step is to invite designs, and we shall of course be guided by the Committee which will be appointed to make a choice of the most appropriate plans and reasonable estimates for the completion of the work. All designs will be submitted to H.E.H. the Nizam, whose princely donation of £60,000 has enabled us to make such a good start.

It is interesting to record that, with the exception of the site purchase-money of £28,000, not a penny of the capital of the Trust Fund has been expended; all necessary payments—such as fees on documents, stamps, solicitors' fees, etc.—have been paid out of the accumulated interest which has been paid on the bank deposits at rates of interest varying from  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to  $4\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. But in case any of the growling brigade—I refer to those very busy people who do nothing but talk and grumble at the efforts of those who really work—may be getting anxious as to the safety of the Trust Fund, I may mention that the Trustees are His Highness the Aga Khan, Sir Abbas Ali Baig, the Hon. Sir Nizamat Jung Bhr, the Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, and myself, and that in the course of a few weeks—or perhaps days—we shall be issuing a balance-sheet in proper form, showing how the capital is taken care of and how the interest has been utilized ever since we became guardians of the Fund.

It is well over a year ago since I made a very earnest and strenuous attempt to interest those who had charge of a small fund which did not show much sign of increasing in value. I then offered my services to help this fund, and expressed my willingness to go out to India to start a fresh collection. All I wanted in return for my time and experience and hard work was a little help with the travelling-expenses, but this was

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refused, and with the assistance of my old and much-valued friend Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din I made the attempt alone. Those who refused to extend me the helping hand assured me that Islam was "moribund" and that I could not hope to succeed. Indeed, cold water was showered on me from many quarters and I seemed enveloped in wet blankets on starting! The presentation of difficulties seemed rather to whet my appetite for success, and, on now looking back, I feel that the obstinate and cruel disregard for my hearty efforts and offers gave me the required strength. Anyhow, to make a long story short, after my second interview with His Exalted Highness he promised me five lakhs of rupees, and after a very short interval donated a second sum of three lakhs more—in all, eight lakhs of rupees or £60,000! Thus, in the short time of three months I collected enough money to make my detractors green with jealousy. I had put up a good fight for Islam, and had won all along the line. When the first announcement was made I was invited to pay the Nizam's money into the account of the old Mosque fund, which had been lying practically dormant for about twenty years. My reply to the innocent suggestion was that I considered that the old fund, being so ridiculously small, should merge into mine. I represented the new line of thought—the "live wire"—and was entitled to the credit of what I had worked for so hard and with such a good heart.

August 16, 1929

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**Service, Sermon, and Lectures** every Sunday at the Mosque, Woking, at 3.15 p.m. Every Friday at 1 p.m.

## WHAT IS ISLAM ?

### WHAT IS ISLAM ?

[The following is a very brief account of Islam, and some of its teaching. For further details, please write to the IMÁM of the Mosque, Woking.]

**ISLAM, THE RELIGION OF PEACE.**—The word Islam literally means : (1) Peace ; (2) the way to achieve peace ; (3) submission ; as submission to another's will is the safest course to establish peace. The word in its religious sense signifies complete submission to the Will of God.

**OBJECT OF THE RELIGION.**—Islam provides its followers with the perfect code whereby they may work out what is noble and good in man, and thus maintain peace between man and man.

**THE PROPHETS OF ISLAM.**—Muhammad, popularly known as the Prophet of Islam, was, however, the last Prophet of the Faith. Muslims, i.e. the followers of Islam, accept all such of the world's prophets, including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, as revealed the Will of God for the guidance of humanity.

**THE QUR-ÁN.**—The Gospel of the Muslim is the Qur-án. Muslims believe in the Divine origin of every other sacred book, but, inasmuch as all such previous revelations have become corrupted through human interpolation, the Qur-án, the last Book of God, came as a recapitulation of the former Gospels.

**ARTICLES OF FAITH IN ISLAM.**—These are seven in number : belief in (1) Allah ; (2) angels ; (3) books from God ; (4) messengers from God ; (5) the hereafter ; (6) the measurement of good and evil ; (7) resurrection after death.

The life after death, according to Islamic teaching, is not a new life, but only a continuance of this life, bringing its hidden realities into light. It is a life of unlimited progress ; those who qualify themselves in this life for the progress will enter into Paradise, which is another name for the said progressive life after death, and those who get their faculties stunted by their misdeeds in this life will be the denizens of the hell—a life incapable of appreciating heavenly bliss, and of torment—in order to get themselves purged of all impurities and thus to become fit for the life in heaven. State after death is an image of the spiritual state in this life.

The sixth article of faith has been confused by some with what is popularly known as Fatalism. A Muslim neither believes in Fatalism nor Predestination ; he believes in Premeasurement. Everything created by God is for good in the given use and under the given circumstances. Its abuse is evil and suffering.

**PILLARS OF ISLAM.**—These are five in number : (1) declaration of faith in the Oneness of God, and in the Divine Messengership of Muhammad ; (2) prayer ; (3) fasting ; (4) almsgiving ; (5) pilgrimage to the Holy Shrine of Mecca.

**ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.**—The Muslims worship one God—the Almighty, the All-knowing, the All-just, the Cherisher of all the

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**Worlds, the Friend, the Guide, the Helper.** There is none like Him. He has no partner. He is neither begotten nor has He begotten any son or daughter. He is Indivisible in Person. He is the Light of the heaven and the earth, the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Glorious, the Magnificent, the Beautiful, the Eternal, the Infinite, the First and the Last.

**FAITH AND ACTION.**—Faith without action is a dead letter. Faith is of itself insufficient, unless translated into action. A Muslim believes in his own personal accountability for his actions in this life and in the hereafter. Each must bear his own burden, and none can expiate for another's sin.

**ETHICS IN ISLAM.**—“Imbue yourself with Divine attributes,” says the noble Prophet. God is the prototype of man, and His attributes form the basis of Muslim ethics. Righteousness in Islam consists in leading a life in complete harmony with the Divine attributes. To act otherwise is sin.

**CAPABILITIES OF MAN IN ISLAM.**—The Muslim believes in the inherent sinlessness of man's nature, which, made of the goodliest fibre, is capable of unlimited progress, setting him above the angels and leading him to the border of Divinity.

**THE POSITION OF WOMAN IN ISLAM.**—Men and women come from the same essence, possess the same soul, and they have been equipped with equal capability for intellectual, spiritual, and moral attainment. Islam places man and woman under like obligations, the one to the other.

**EQUALITY OF MANKIND AND THE BROTHERHOOD OF ISLAM.**—Islam is the religion of the Unity of God and the equality of mankind. Lineage, riches, and family honours are accidental things; virtue and the service of humanity are the matters of real merit. Distinctions of colour, race, and creed are unknown in the ranks of Islam. All mankind is of one family, and Islam has succeeded in welding the black and the white into one fraternal whole.

**PERSONAL JUDGMENT.**—Islam encourages the exercise of personal judgment and respects difference of opinion, which, according to the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, is a blessing of God.

**KNOWLEDGE.**—The pursuit of knowledge is a duty in Islam, and it is the acquisition of knowledge that makes men superior to angels.

**SANCTITY OF LABOUR.**—Every labour which enables man to live honestly is respected. Idleness is deemed a sin.

**CHARITY.**—All the faculties of man have been given to him as a trust from God, for the benefit of his fellow-creatures. It is man's duty to live for others, and his charities must be applied without any distinction of persons. Charity in Islam brings man nearer to God. Charity and the giving of alms have been made obligatory, and every person who possesses property above a certain limit has to pay a tax, levied on the rich for the benefit of the poor.